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**CMU News Source:**

**'March Madness' gambling brackets can be first step toward an addiction**



**SOURCE:**

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<http://rpl.cmich.edu/faculty/otteman.htm> and <http://www.timotteman.com>

When the 2008 NCAA men's basketball tournament begins, people across the nation will frantically be checking scores and updating the status of their tournament brackets. Central Michigan University faculty member Tim Otteman, an internationally quoted authority on sports-related gambling, is available to discuss sports gambling trends, particularly as they relate to so-called "March Madness." Among Otteman's thoughts:

**Regarding the popularity of sports gambling:**

"Sports gambling is the recreational choice of this generation. From buying a Super Bowl square for America's most popular one-day event to filling out an NCAA bracket for college basketball's three-week tournament frenzy to betting via an online account or wagering directly with a bookmaker, sports gambling has overtaken baseball as America's pastime."

**Regarding NCAA brackets and problem gambling:**

"Sports gambling has become so popular and socially acceptable that the completion of an NCAA tournament bracket has become as much of a spring tradition as spring break trips to sunny destinations or Punxsutawney Phil looking for his shadow. The NCAA estimates that one in 10 Americans will complete a bracket for the NCAA tournament. While it may seem like filling out an NCAA bracket for \$5 or \$10 is a harmless and fun diversion, in reality it potentially begins a pattern of behavior that may lead to problem gambling or addiction. While not everyone who plays the brackets develops a gambling addiction, no one becomes an addict without a first experience with the activity or substance they are addicted to, regardless of whether the dependence is alcohol, drugs or gambling. Frequently the first bet for a sports gambler is filling out a bracket for the NCAA tournament."

**Regarding college students and gambling:**

"Numerous large-scale studies indicate that college students are two to four times more likely to become pathological gamblers than the general adult population. If you consider the tremendous amount of information available about the games via the Internet, the 50/50 odds on predicting a winner with the point spread, the popularity of college athletics, the competitive spirit of this generation of students and the disposable time a college student enjoys, it is easy to see how the acceptability of gambling by society mixed with the culture of the collegiate experience creates the 'perfect storm' for involvement in sports gambling."

Otteman is an authority on sports gambling, event management, recreational programming, and sports management and administration.